

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9498

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 0992

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG US LEB

SUBJECT: FAHMY ON LEBANON

REF: CAIRO 0936

SUMMARY. FAHMY COMMENTS LEBANESE AND ARABS CONTINUE TO BELIEVE USG SUPPORTS CHRISTIANS. WHILE CEASEFIRE IS HOLDING, IT MAY BE NO MORE THAN A "BREATHING SPACE". ONLY FRANGIYYA HAS ACCEPTED IT, AND PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH SYRIANS/PALESTINIANS ARE SEEKING TO IMPOSE. EDDE WILL BE NEXT PRESIDENT OF LEBANON. QADASIYAH BATTALIONS NOW IN LEBANON CONSIST MAINLY OF SYRIAN TROOPS WEARING PLA UNIFORMS WIT ONLY SPRINKLING OF PALESTINIANS AMONG THEM. THEY HAVE ALREADY SEEN ACTION IN LEBANON. EGYPIANS HAVE RESPONDED TO ARAFAT'S APPEAR TO SEND BATTALION OF AIN JALLUT TROOPS, WHICH SHOULD NOW BE IN LEBANON. IF FRANCE UNDERTAKES NEW INITIATIVE, USG SHOULD NOT PARTICIPATE SINCE, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, OUR MOTIVES ARE SUSPECT IN LEBANON AND ESLEWHERE IN THE ARAB WORLD. SHOULD ISRAELIS UNDERTAKE MILITARY INITIATIVE AGAINST LEBANON, PRESSURES AGAINST SADAT WILL BE SERIOUS. SINAI II COULD WELL GO BY THE BOARD. USG SHOULD SEEK TO PREVENT SUCH ISRAELI ACTION. THEN, SOMEWHAT INCONSISTENTLY, HE STATED THAT IF ISRAELIS DO

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ACT, USG SHOULD SUPPORT CHRISTIANS WITH ARMS AND

AMMUNITION. AS EVIDENT FROM ABOVE, GOE POSITION RE LEBANESE CEASEFIRE IS AMBIVALENT. THERE IS MUCH CARPING ABOUT EGYPTIAN INABILITY INFLUENCE LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS AND SINAI II IS BEING BLAMED. THAT SYRIANS SHOULD RECEIVE THE CREDIT IS ALSO GALLING. END SUMMARY.

1. LAST NIGHT FAHMY GAVE A RECEPTION FOR THE ENTIRE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. AFTER ABOUT 45 MINUTES OF GREETING GUESTS, HE DISAPPEARED AND SHORTLY AFTERWARDS SENT FOR ME. HE WAS SEATED IN HIS OFFICE, BORED TO TEARS WITH THE WHOLE AFFAIR, AND WANTED TO TALK. I SPENT OVER AN HOUR WITH HIM DURING WHICH WE DISCUSSED SEVERAL SUBJECTS, AMONG THEM LEBANON. AS YOU WILL SEE FROM THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT, HIS POSITION ON LEBANON IS AMBIVALENT TO SAY THE LEAST.

2. FAHMY FIRST STATED FOUR PROMINENT LEBANESE (UNSPECIFIED) HAD BEEN IN TO SEE HIM EARLIER THAT DAY. ALL HAD INSISTED THAT, DESPITE WHAT USG IS NOW SAYING, WE REALLY SUPPORT PARTITION. I AGAIN EMPHASIZED TO FAHMY THAT THIS IS NOT SO. WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO ALL THE LEBANESE PARTIES THAT WE ARE AGAINST PARTITION. I HOPED HE HAD MADE THAT POINT TO HIS LEBANESE INTERLOCUTORS. SINCE FAHMY'S RESPONSE WAS INCONCLUSIVE, I ASKED HIM WHETHER HE BELIEVED US OR NOT ON THIS MATTER. HE THEN SAID THAT HE DOES, BUT CONTENDED THAT FEW LEBANESE DO.

3. ASKED ABOUT CURRENT LEBANESE CEASEFIRE, FAHMY GURDINGLY CONCEDED IT SEEMS TO BE HOLDING -- AT LEAST FOR NOW. ECHOING CONCERN EXPRESSED BY GENERAL NASSAR PREVIOUS DAY (CAIRO 0948), HE SPECULATED THAT THE CURRENT LEBANESE CEASEFIRE MAY BE NO MORE THAN A "BREATHING SPACE." IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE CHRISTIANS WILL PERMANENTLY ACCEPT THE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS THAT THE SYRIANS/PALESTINIANS ARE SEEKING TO IMPOSE UPON THE. PRINCIPAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS LIKE CHAMAOUN, GEMAYYIL AND EDDE HAVE NOT RPT NOT ACCEPTED THESE POLITICAL TERMS. ONLY FRANJIYYA HAS DONE SO AND, ACCORDING TO FAHMY, FRANJIYYA CAN SPEAK ONLY FOR HIMSELF. FRANJIYYA, HE SUGGESTED, WILL BE LUCKY IF HE GETS OUT OF THIS SITUATION ALIVE. IN AGREEING TO SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN CONDITIONS, FRANJIYYA
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HAD ASKED FOR GUARANTEES FOR HIS AND HIS FAMILY'S SAFETY. UNSOLICITEDLY, FAHMY SUGGESTED THAT RAYMOND EDDE WILL BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF LEBANON.

4. FAHMY REITERATED HIS EARLIER CONTENTION THAT QADASIYAH BATTALIONS NOW IN LEBANON ARE IN FACT SYRIAN TROOPS WEARING PLA UNIFORMS. HE DOUBTED THAT THERE ARE MORE THAN 200 PALESTINIANS IN THE WHOLE GROUP.

HE INSISTED THAT SYRIANS HAVE ALREADY BEEN IN ACTION IN LEBANON. HE THEN ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED TO ME THAT A BATTALION OF THE AIN JALLUT BRIGADE HAS BEEN SENT BY SEA TO LATAKIA, REITERATING THIS DEPLOYMENT RESULTS FROM ARAFAT'S REQUEST (CAIRO 0950). HE ESTIMATES THE NUMBER TO BE ABOUT 300. IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY DEPLOYED FROM LATAKIA TO LEBANON, BUT HE HAD NO CONFIRMATION OF THIS.

5. ALLUDING TO AN EARLIER COMMENT ABOUT HAVING SUGGESTED TO THE FRENCH THAT THEY UNDERTAKE A NEW INITIATIVE, FAHMY COMMENTED THAT IF FRANCE SHOULD HAVE TO DO SO, THE USG SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE A PARTICIPANT IN SUCH AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT. WE SHOULD REALIZE THAT USG MOTIVES, RIGHTLY OR WRONG, ARE SUSPECT IN LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE IN THE ARAB WORLD.

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSAJOR

6. FAHMY NEXT EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE ISRAELIS MAY REACT TO THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED CEASEFIRE AND MAKE MILITARY MOVES INTO LEBANON. AGAIN UNSOLICITEDLY, HE WARNED THAT IF THAT HAPPENS, SADAT WILL BE UNABLE TO HOLD THE SITUATION. IN HIS VIEW, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE KEEP THE ISRAELIS QUIET. AN ISRAELI MILITARY MOVEMENT INTO LEBANON WOULD SPELL THE END OF SINAI II. THE PRESSURES ON SADAT WILL BE ENORMOUS, INCLUDING PRESSURES TO BREAK RELATIONS. AFTER FIRST SAYING HE COULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF A BREAK IN RELATIONS, HE

ALTERED HIS VIEW AND SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD WANT TO KEEP ME HERE. HE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT AN ISRAELI MOVE ITO LEBANON WILL CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR SADAT AND GRAVE HARM TO US POLICY IN THE AREA.

7. THEN, SOMEWHAT INCONSISTENTLY, FAHMY ADDED THAT IF THE ISRAELIS SHOULD MOVE, THE USG SHOULD SUPPORT THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WITH ARMS AND MONEY. THIS COULD BE DONE FROM BRUSSELS, PARIS OR ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE. HE PROFESSED TO KNOW THAT WE ARE ALREADY SENDING ASSISTANCE TO THE CHRISTIANS THROUGH EUROPE. ASKED HOW HE EXPLAINED THE INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THIS SUGGESTION AND WHAT HE HAD SAID ONLY FIE MINUTES EARLIER, FAHMY SIMPLY SAID ONE HAD TO MOVE WITH A TACTICAL SITUATION.

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8. COMMENT: AS EVIDENT FROM THE ABOVE AND PREVIOUS MESSAGES, THE EGYPTIANS -- AT LEAST FAHMY -- ARE ONLY GRUDGINGLY ACCEPTING THE SYRIAN-IMPOSED CEASE-FIRE IN LEBANON. THEY ARE BITTER THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE SYRIANS WHO WERE ABLE TO SUCCEED AND ARE SEEKING TO DENIGRATE THAT SUCCESS BYCONTENDING A) IF IT WAS THAT EASY, THE SYRIANS COULD HAVE DONE SO LONG AGO, AND B) THE CEASEFIRE IS NO MORE THAN A "BREATHING SPACE." THERE IS MUCH FRUSTRATION ABOUT EGYPTIAN INABILITY TO INFLUENCE LEBANESE DEVELOPMENS, AND THERE IS SOME GRUMBLING HERE THAT SINAI II IS RESPONSIBLE. EGYPTIAN REACTION TO A POSSIBLE ISRAELI MILITARY INITIATIVE IS MIXED. WHILE WORRIED ABOUT THE CONSE-QUENCES OF SUCH AN INITIATIVE, THEY WOULD ALSO NOT BE UNHAPPY IF THE SYRIANS WERE SOMEHOW GIVEN THEIR COME-UPPANCE, PROVIDED THIS COULD BE DONE QUICKLY. FOR THE MOMENT, GOE CAN DO NO MORE THAN GROUSE ABOUT LEBANESE SITUATION WITH LITTLE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE. FOR EGYPTIANS THIS IS GALLING, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE SYRIANS ARE RECEIVING THE CREDIT. EILTS

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